THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The arrivals of wheat in the mandis is 112.74 lakh tonnes in Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2007-08 on 7.5.2007 as compared to 124.91 lakh tonnes of arrivals in the corresponding periods in RMS 2006-07.

The Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat was fixed at Rs. 750 per quintal for RMS 2007-08, an increase of Rs. 100 per quintal over and above the MSP is also being given this year compared to Rs. 50 per quintal given last year.

(c) Yes, Sir. According to the Third Advance Estimates of the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, the estimated production of wheat is likely to be 73.70 million tonnes in crop year 2006-07 (to be marketed in RMS 2007-08) compared to 69.35 million tonnes in crop year 2005-06.

(d) Since harvesting of wheat in major wheat producing States in RMS 2007-08 was later than last year, market arrivals were also late. In RMS 2007-08, substantial harvesting of wheat in Punjab & Haryana has been done manually while in previous years the harvesting was done by using combined harvestors, resulting in slower market arrivals.

Contract for import of wheat

+4020. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:
SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of wheat for which contract for import was given to public sector companies like STC and MMTC for 2006-07 alongwith the rate and dates on which such contracts were given;

(b) whether Government have exempted private companies also for importing duty free wheat arid on which date such decision was taken;

(c) the reasons for exempting private companies for importing duty free wheat; and

(d) the quantum of wheat Imported by such private companies and the details thereof?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) During the year 2006-07, the Government authorized the State Trading Corporation (STC) to import 55 lakh tons of wheat. Accordingly, STC had finalized five international tenders as per the following details:

S. No.	Tender Date	Contracted Quantity (in Lakh MTs)	Weighted Average C & F (FO) Price (in US $ per MT)
1.	10-02-2006	5	178.75
2.	08-05-2006	8	191.388
3.	12-06-2006	22	197.817
4.	27-07-2006	3.3	210.72
5.	30-08-2006	16.7	228.94
	Grand Total	55.0	205.31

(b) *Vide* Notification No. 97/2006-Cus dated September 9,2006 of Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, the *ad-valorem* duty rates of wheat were reduced to 'NIL' rate of duty for private companies under Open General License (OGL). Zero duty imports under OGL, have been extended by the Government up to 31st December, 2007.

(c) The reasons for exempting private companies for importing duty free wheat was to encourage private companies to import to ensure adequacy of supply and stability in prices.

(d)As per data received from Dte. of PPQ & S, Faridabad, 9.37 lakh tonnes of wheat has been imported by private companies as on 3-5-2007 at Chennai, Tuticorin, Mangalore, Mumbai, Vishakhapatnam and Cochin ports from Canada, Australia, Hungry, Ukraine, Russia, France, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria and Pakistan.

Food Security

4021. SHRI EKANATH K.THAKUR :Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a significant part of the country is still struggling to get two square meals even as our country is the second fastest growing economy;